

Hotchkiss High Design Team Wins First Place at National Competition

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HOTCHKISS, Colo., Feb. 22, 2011 -- The Hotchkiss High School National Engineering Design Competition team, all team members in a physics class taught by Richard Hypio, has won first place honors in the national competition sponsored by NISH and the Junior Engineering Technical Society in Arlington, Va.

Competition team members Brandon Duval, Isaac Fisher, Zachary Larmer, David Murry and Cody Spiker won based on a 15-minute live presentation, a five-minute Q&A with the judges, and a display they built about their project -- an assistive device for a community member with a physical disability.

The team's entry was underwritten by the Arch Coal Foundation through its 2010 Innovative Teaching Grants program. "This proves that 'big ideas' can come from places like Delta County. They come from innovative students led by teachers who challenge and coach them, like Hotchkiss High School's Richard Hypio," said West Elk Mine General Manager Don Vickers. "We're proud of them and the way they've represented our area."

Hypio said the competition was impressive. "The other four finalists brought excellent ideas to the competition. I was extremely proud of how our school's team held up to the pressure and presented its design in a very competent, professional manner," Hypio said. "We prepared our presentation and practiced it before two backup judges, who gave us some good insights and recommendations. Then, the night before the presentation, the team reworked those comments into its final presentation.

"It was a humbling experience to be there and compete," said Hypio. "More than a competition, it was a 'celebration' of doing something for others. All five final teams had spent much time working not necessarily for a reward, but for the opportunity to improve the lives of others. The judges told us they liked our down-to-earth product, saying it was eloquent in its simplicity."

The students chose a local "client," Paul Larmer, who is very active in the community and works as a publisher. Given his frequent air travel, it is extremely difficult for him to manage his luggage in airports. The student team invented the "Caboose," which allows Larmer to handle his luggage "hands free."

"Doing something for Paul Larmer may also, in time, do something for others," said Hypio. "After the competition, the team was given some suggestions and guidance about patenting and possibly taking its product to market."

Team member Ryan Spor was unable to attend the competition, as he was competing in the state wrestling tournament. Hypio said his teammates consider Spor to be an essential element of the team, and brought him his Gold Medal from the event. The team will receive a \$2,000 prize and will determine how best to use it. In addition, they received a trophy and two additional awards at the national competition, Best Use of Universal Design Principles and Most Marketable Design. As the coach, Hypio received an American flag manufactured by North Bay Industries, an employer of persons with disabilities. He presented the flag to Hotchkiss High, where it will be displayed with pride.

A video featuring the students and their award-winning Caboose is posted online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g88F_ytUoJI.

Arch Coal's Mountain Coal Company and its West Elk Mine are located near Somerset. Approximately 350 people are employed at West Elk. Arch Coal, Inc. is one of the nation's largest coal producers. Through its national network of mines, Arch supplies the fuel for approximately 8 percent of the electricity generated in the United States. The company also ships coal to domestic and international steel manufacturers as well as international power producers. Arch is listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: ACI) and maintains its corporate headquarters in St. Louis.